

Two letters, from one service provider, along with one verbal comment, were submitted to the Department of Commerce on May 13, 2015. The comments along with *responses by the MN Department of Commerce are included below.*

Dakota County Community Development Agency

Please correct the listing of Dakota County from Dakota County Housing and Redevelopment Authority to Dakota County Community Development Agency. This name change occurred approximately 15 years ago.

This has been corrected.

Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties Response to the 2015-2016 State Weatherization Assistance Program Plan
Date Submitted: May 13, 2015

IV.4 DOE-Funded Leveraging Activities

– Page 2/5 - Last sentence, change the Program Year to 2015.

This has been corrected.

IV.7 Miscellaneous

Page 4/5 - LED lights – Does the State plan on having WA ready to model LED lights at the start of the PY15? This will be the second year that the State Plan has included LED's but we have not been able to install them. CAPRW staff is excited about this opportunity and would like to be able to perform this work.

Commerce has contracted with the WA developer to work on updates to WA 8.9. LED lighting is one of the top priorities.

V.1.2 Approach to Determining Building Eligibility

Page 2/15 – Rental Units/Multifamily Buildings will be addressed – Currently the landlord document asks the landlord if they are interested in financially supporting the weatherization work. The landlord has the option to either support, or say “no” to any financial support. CAPRW is proposing for rental properties four or under that we receive financial participation from landlords except if the landlord is low income. This landlord financial support would help reduce the high costs of performing weatherization work on these properties.

Commerce has updated the Program Year 2015 State Plan to allow for local Service Provider discretion in requiring landlord contributions when weatherizing rental properties containing 1-4 units, except in cases where the landlord also qualifies for weatherization services. Service Providers will be required to document any required landlord contribution policies.

CAPRW is proposing that landlord financial contributions should also be used to buy-down health and safety items that could then make a SIR. Example: Water heaters are currently health and safety but could be brought in to a SIR with landlord financial contribution.

As stated in V.1.2, “landlord participation can be used to buy down an SIR”.

V.5.1 Technical Guides and Materials

Page 5/15 – CAPRW is assuming that Commerce will provide language to Service Providers regarding SWS specifications for quality work as described in the MN Field Guide 2015, for inclusion in our vendor weatherization contracts by July 1, 2015.

Commerce will provide standard language for Service Providers to incorporate into contracts with contractors prior to the start of Program Year 2015.

Page 4 /15 – CFR is misspelled.

This has been corrected.

V.5.3 Final Inspection

Page 6/15 – CAPRW would like more information on the Quality Assurance Plan, what is it, when is it due to be completed, and can the Plan be changed in the middle of the year? Example: Currently CAPRW has segregation of job duties between the auditor and the inspector. However there may be times during the year that CAPRW needs to utilize the auditor for the inspection.

A Quality Assurance Plan is only required in responsive situations where there is a shortage of QCI inspectors to maintain segregation of job duties. Commerce will expect Service Providers to explore partnerships with nearby Service Providers or independent QCIs before allowing the model described in V.5.3 under QCI Shortage. A Quality Assurance Plan would be due to Commerce once a Service Provider has explored all options and approached Commerce to request the 10% monitoring approach.

WPN 15-4:

Grantee must also develop a quality assurance plan that ensures that the individual who is functioning as both the auditor and the quality control inspector is able to consistently perform both tasks.

V.8.4 Training and Technical Assistance Approach and Activities

Page 11/15 –CAPRW is proposing that Service Providers have the flexibility to utilize T&TA funds to pay for software development, both the developer’s time and staff developer’s time. Example: Currently CAPRW is working with a software company to develop electronic workflow.

Commerce reviews T&TA expense requests on a case by case basis to ensure alignment with 15-1, 10 CFR 440, and WPN 15-4. More information is needed to respond to CAPRW’s question, outside of the public hearing response.

Page 11/15 – Paragraph four refers to signing a retention agreement in accordance with DOE guidelines for sub-contractors who attend weatherization trainings. CAPRW is questioning what this document is, what purpose it serves, and who is responsible for putting the document together?

From DOE's Program Year 2015 application instructions:

"T&TA funds may also be used to train contractors at the Subgrantee level participating in the Program. In making the determination to pay for contractors' training, Grantees and Subgrantees must secure a retention agreement in exchange for the training. The retention agreement should require that contractors will work in the Program for a specific amount of time and must align with the cost of the T&TA provided."

Subgrantees are responsible for developing the retention agreement with their contractors. Technical assistance can be requested of Commerce.

Page 11/15 – CAPRW's expectation is that when QCI standards go into effect on July 1, 2015, State Monitoring visits will increase in time due to the additional testing and inspecting requirements that the State Monitor will perform. Does the State have an indication how much more time the State Monitor will spend with the Service Providers? Example: Instead of one day with four inspections will it be two days with four inspections?

Commerce acknowledges and anticipates that time spent on field monitoring visits will increase after July 1, 2015. The first monitoring visits of the program year will help Commerce evaluate how much time visits will take and we will adjust the monitoring schedule as needed.

Minnesota's PY2015 Health and Safety Plan

Page 2- Paragraph two states: "For PY2015 Minnesota will use the USDOE adjusted average cost per dwelling of \$7,105. The Health and Safety per unit average, after the analysis completed below (Weighted State Average Chart), is set at \$1,100", for a total of \$8,205. The May 2015 WAP Wire states: "Increasing the cost per unit to \$6,988 and the health and safety limit to \$1,100", for a total of \$8,088. What are the correct breakout numbers?

Minnesota will use the USDOE adjusted average cost per dwelling of \$7,105.

Page 4 – Paragraph two: "Commerce requires that heating systems over seven years of age be evaluated for replacement". CAPRW would like to suggest adding additional verbiage "Heating systems over seven years of age or non-sealed combustion, and less than 90% efficient be evaluated for replacement".

Thank you for your input. Commerce will consider updating this portion of the plan for Program Year 2016.

Page 4 – Asbestos in Siding, Walls and Ceilings. – Paragraph 4 – CAPRW would like further clarification on vermiculite testing and removal. Vermiculite testing can be paid for with DOE funds but abatement is not allowed using DOE funds. If Service Providers test vermiculite in an

attic and it is found not to have asbestos does the Service Provider have the ability to insulate the property? Is the State's expectation that vermiculite samples be collected by the Service Provider auditors or the Service Providers hire an AHERA certified professional to collect the samples? How many test samples should Service Providers collect at a house? Does Commerce plan on providing a vermiculite procedures protocol policy to Service Providers for testing and removal by July 1, 2015? If a policy cannot be produced by that time period is the expectation that Service Providers proceed as usual and walk away from properties with vermiculite?

Thank you for your input. This was clarified at the recent statewide Energy Conference. Please contact Commerce for the detail that was provided at the training.

Conclusion: CAPRW's leadership and staff are seeing positive changes with the State's reorganization of DER staff. State staff are listening and responding to CAPRW's program needs and requests in a timely manner, and staff is open minded and process information logically to come to reasonable conclusions and policies. CAPRW is wholeheartedly supporting the new direction of the department.

Thank you for your input.

Comments submitted on May 13, 2015, by: Cynthia Webster, Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties Energy Conservation Program Director.